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communication means for sending the input identification particulars to the remote station for comparison with the reference identification particulars and receiving the result of said comparison;

5 signal generation means for selectively generating a warning signal in response to said result;

timing means for timing the duration for which the vehicle is parked in the parking zone;

processor means for calculating a monetary amount due for parking for said duration in the parking zone;

10 display means for displaying the monetary amount due; and
monetary receiving means for receiving the monetary amount due.

Further in accordance with the invention, there is provided a system for monitoring and identifying vehicles in a plurality of parking zones, the system including

15 a remote station at which reference identification particulars of vehicles are stored;

at least one device for identifying a vehicle parked in one of a plurality of parking zones with which the device is associated, the device including a housing shaped and dimensioned to be hand-held within
20 which is housed:

input means for feeding input identification particulars of a vehicle parked in a parking zone into the device;

communication means for receiving the reference identification particulars from the remote station;

25 storage means for storing said reference identification particulars;

timing means for timing the duration for which the vehicle is parked in the parking zone;

processor means connected to the input means and to the storage means, the processor means including comparator means for comparing the input identification particulars with the reference identification particulars, the processor means being operable to calculate a monetary amount due for parking for said duration in the parking zone so that the device functions as a parking meter;

signal generating means for selectively generating a warning signal in response to the comparison;

display means for displaying the monetary amount due; and

monetary receiving means for receiving the monetary amount due.

The communication means may be a wireless communication means.

The monetary receiving means may include card reading means for reading information stored on a card and feeding it to the processor means for processing payment electronically.

The input means may include a reader capable of reading a tag device hidden in or on the vehicle in a wireless fashion, the tag device carrying the said identification particulars of the vehicle.

In certain embodiments, the system includes a control centre and a plurality of remote stations at remote locations associated with parking zones, each remote station being in communication with the control centre via a telecommunication network to receive reference identification particulars and each device being in wireless communication with an associated remote station.

The telecommunication network is typically a cellular telephone network. Accordingly, the reference identification particulars may be downloaded by means of SMS messaging.

5 In certain embodiments, the telecommunication network is the Internet.

10 The remote station may include alternate communication means for communicating with other databases. For example, the base station may include a further communication interface arranged to interface with NATIS (National Traffic Information Service). The interface may be configured to communicate via the Internet to NATIS, law enforcement authorities, or the like. A plurality of regional base stations may be provided which are each linked via a communication network, e.g. the Internet, to a national control centre.

15 Still further in accordance with the invention, there is provided a method of monitoring and identifying a vehicle in a parking zone, the method including

feeding identification particulars of a vehicle in a parking zone into a hand-held device;

20 transmitting the identification particulars to a remote station;
comparing said identification particulars of the vehicle in the parking zone with reference identification particulars at the remote station;

selectively generating a warning signal in response to the comparison;

25 timing the duration for which the vehicle is parked in the parking zone;